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The battle rain
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THE BATTLE RAINBOW.*

BY JOHN R. THOMPSON.

The warm weary day was departing—the smile
Of the sunset gave token the tempest had ceased,
And the lightning yet fitfully gleamed for awhile
On the cloud that sank sullen and dark in the east.

There our army, awaiting the terrible fight
Of the morrow, lay hopeful and watchful and still;
Where their tents all the region had sprinkled with white
From river to river, o'er meadow and hill.

While above them the fierce cannonade of the sky
Blazed and burst from the vapours that muffled the sun,
Their "counterfeit clamours" gave forth no reply;
And slept, till the battle, the charge in each gun.

When lo! on the cloud, a miraculous thing!
Broke in beauty the rainbow our host to enfold;
The centre o'erspread by its arch, and each wing
Suffused with its azure and crimson and gold.

Blest omen of victory, symbol divine
Of peace after tumult, repose after pain,
How sweet, and how glowing with promise the sign
To eyes that should never behold it again!

For the fierce flame of war on the morrow flashed out,
And its thunder peals filled all the tremulous air:
Over slippery entrenchment and reddened redoubt
Rang the wild cheer of triumph, the cry of despair.

Then a long week of glory and agony came—
Of mute supplication and yearning and dread:
When day unto day gave the record of fame,
And night unto night gave the list of its dead.

We had triumphed—the foe had fled back to his ships—
His standards in rags and his legions a wreck—
But alas! the stark faces and colourless lips
Of our loved ones gave triumph's rejoicings a check.

Not yet, oh not yet, as a sign of release,
Had the Lord set in mercy his bow in the cloud,
Not yet had the Comforter whispered of peace
To the hearts that around us lay bleeding and bowed.

But the promise was given—the beautiful arc,
With its brilliant confusion of colours, that spanned
The sky on that exquisite eve, was the mark
Of the Infinite Love overarching the land:

And that Love, shining richly and full as the day,
Though the tear-drops that moisten each martyr's proud pall,
On the gloom of the past the bright bow shall display
Of Freedom, Peace, Victory bent over all.

RICHMOND, 20 JULY, 1862.

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* On the evening which preceded the commencement of the recent battles before Richmond, a magnificent rainbow, following after a grand thunder storm, overspread the eastern sky, exactly defining the position of the Confederate Army, as seen from the Capital.

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